

FWP COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

Meeting Date: November 8, 2012

Agenda Item: 2012-13 Helena Urban Deer Proposed Take

Division: Wildlife

Action Needed: Approval of Proposed Rule

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 10 minutes

Background

In 2003, the Montana Legislature authorized cities to create plans to control wildlife to address public health and safety within city limits. Such plans must be approved by FWP. The City of Helena subsequently developed an Urban Deer Management Plan seeking to remove 350 deer to achieve an objective of 25 deer per square mile. After much discussion, commissioners ultimately approved two pilot projects for the removal of 200 urban deer by the City of Helena.

After the pilot efforts, and from lessons learned, the City sought to define a programmatic approach. This included a third, programmatic EA that confirmed Helena's urban deer management objectives and methods. The plan requires annual FWP Commission approval of deer removals. To date, 530 deer have been removed, including 105 this year. FWP does not contribute staff or resources to actual removal efforts. Any quotas do not apply to individual deer removed under urgent public-safety situations.

Survey data are collected and analyzed annually in October. Subsequently, the City, in cooperation with the local FWP biologist, establishes a level of take, which is presented to the commission as a proposal in November and finalized in December, when take efforts are authorized to begin. Last year, largely due to mild winter conditions, deer were reluctant to enter traps and the take (105) was well below the authorized limit (220). Under those circumstances, it would be helpful to extend the take period into the following fall, to allow additional time for the City to take deer. FWP proposes that take be authorized through Dec. 31, 2013, with a no-take period extending from April 1 through Nov. 30, 2013.

The population survey data are collected but not yet analyzed. The population estimate and take objective will be provided to the commission prior to the Nov. 8 meeting. The city-wide population objective of 25 deer per square mile remains. Proposed trap and removal methods are identical to those employed previously.

Public Involvement Process & Results

The City of Helena conducted extensive public involvement in developing its plan and the previous urban deer environmental assessments. FWP provided separate 30-day public comment periods. Public support has been split throughout these earlier processes. Public comment on this proposal will run thru 5 p.m. Monday, Dec. 17, with final action on Dec. 20, 2012.

Alternatives and Analysis

Proposals may be adopted as proposed, with adjustment, with additions, with deletions or no change from 2012 (status quo) as per staff justifications, public comment and commission discussion.

Proposed Motion

I move the FWP Commission adopt the proposed 2012-13 take of urban deer by the City of Helena as presented by City staff and FWP.

